

Department of State, Washington, D.C.

Russia: Change in Immigrant Visa Processing to Warsaw, Poland and Suspension of Routine Consular Services in Moscow

- In December, we will begin scheduling new immigrant visa interviews, including fiancé and Diversity Visa interviews, for residents of Russia at U.S. Embassy Warsaw. We will not schedule new immigrant visa appointments for Russian residents in Moscow.
- As we transition our immigrant visa operations for Russian residents to Poland, we will continue to communicate with applicants so they have current information. In all cases, applicants should not make travel plans until they have a scheduled immigrant visa interview appointment.
- The Russian government's decision to prohibit the United States from retaining, hiring, or contracting Russian or third-country staff severely impacts our ability to provide consular services. The extremely limited number of consular staff in Russia at this time does not allow us to provide routine visa or U.S. citizen services.
- There is no ideal solution for processing immigrant visas for Russian residents outside Russia. In transitioning to Warsaw, Poland, we considered a number of factors including proximity, availability of flights, convenience for applicants, space to accommodate additional applicants, the prevalence of Russian speakers among our locally-employed personnel, and the availability of sufficient staff.
- Russia-based applicants for nonimmigrant visas may apply at any U.S. embassy or consulate overseas but must be physically present in the country at the time of the application.

Q/A:

GENERAL OPERATIONS

Q: Why are you no longer issuing visas in Moscow?

- In April 2021, the Government of Russia notified the U.S. Mission to Russia that all Russian citizens (Locally Employed (LE) Staff) and third country nationals employed by the Mission would need to be terminated. The final termination date was August 1, 2021. This has an

outsized impact on consular services due to the nature of the work and the necessary reliance on LE staff for administrative visa and American Citizen Services (ACS) functions. The extremely limited number of remaining consular officers in Moscow do not have the capacity to provide routine services.

Q: When does the change take effect?

- We will begin transitioning new cases in December. Applicants who have not yet been scheduled should wait to be contacted.

Q: Why did the Department designate U.S. Embassy Warsaw to process immigrant visa cases for Russians?

- In determining an alternative location to process Russian immigrant visa cases, we weighed a variety of factors, including proximity, space to accommodate additional applicants and personnel, cost and convenience to applicants, and the availability of staff to adjudicate the cases. While transferring immigrant visas cases to another post is never an ideal solution, based on an evaluation of all of these factors, moving these operations to U.S. Embassy Warsaw is currently the best solution.

Q: Given that Poland is a Polish-speaking country, how will U.S. Embassy Warsaw handle immigrant visa cases for Russian-speaking applicants?

- Embassy Warsaw has Russian-speaking staff. . We also intend to recruit additional staff with appropriate language skills and experience to process visa cases in Warsaw.

IMMIGRANT VISAS

Q: How does the change affect immigrant visa applicants?

- Immigrant visas for Russians will be processed at U.S. Embassy Warsaw. This will begin in December for new cases.

Q: How are you communicating with applicants?

- We will continue to provide updates on the U.S. Embassy Moscow and U.S. Embassy Warsaw websites.
- Unless informed otherwise, applicants who had previously scheduled immigrant visa appointments should attend those appointments as scheduled.

- Those who have not yet had an immigrant visa interview appointment scheduled may contact the National Visa Center for a status update on their case. Please send just one inquiry and be patient. NVC will respond as quickly as possible.

Q: Do Russians require a visa in order to enter Poland?

- Yes, Russians are required to obtain a Schengen visa to Poland. The Government of Poland makes determinations regarding the entry of foreign nationals into that country. We would refer additional questions to the Poland Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the nearest Polish embassy or consulate.

NONIMMIGRANT VISAS

Q: How will you handle emergency visa cases?

- U.S. Embassy Moscow's ability to provide visa services is severely limited by reduced staffing. Since May 12, U.S. Embassy Moscow has suspended non-diplomatic nonimmigrant visa services.
- Russian nationals, like nationals of other countries, may apply for nonimmigrant visas at our embassies and consulates in other countries around the world.

Q: Can Russian nationals apply for nonimmigrant visas at U.S. embassies or consulates in other countries? Should they apply in Warsaw, Poland?

- Russian residents, like residents of other countries, may apply for nonimmigrant visas at any U.S. embassy or consulate around the world, but must be physically present in the country at the time of application. Due to the current global pandemic and other mitigating factors, some locations, may currently only be able to assist local citizens and residents. Applicants should make an appointment prior to travel and should be mindful of host country regulations.

Q: How many people will this affect?

- We refer you to the visa statistics on travel.state.gov, which provide data on yearly visa issuances.

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